

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
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P 180516Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6100

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SUVA

AMCONSUL AUCKLAND

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, NZ

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA-NEW ZEALAND CIVIL AVIATION

- CONSULTATIONS

1. NEW ZEALAND MINISTER OF TRANSPORT MCLACHLAN, ACCOMPANIED BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT EDWARDS, UNDERTOOK AN UNEXPECTED QUICK VISIT TO AUSTRALIA THIS WEEK TO CONFER WITH HIS COUNTERPART MR. NIXON. MCLACHLAN AND NIXON ARE CLOSE PERSONAL FRIENDS AND MCLACHLAN DID NOT SHARE FULLY THE REASONS FOR HIS TRIP WITH MINISTRY OFFICIALS. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD, HOWEVER, THAT THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE TRIP WAS TO DISCUSS THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED U.K.-AUSTRALIAN CIVIL AVIATION TALKS AND POSSIBLE CHANGES IN TRANS-TASMAN SERVICE. ALTHOUGH WE ARE TOLD THAT CONTINENTAL WILL PROBABLY ALSO COME UP, THE CONTINENTAL APPLICATION WAS NEITHER THE REASON FOR THE TRIP NOR THE CENTERPIECE OF DISCUSSION.

2. THE AUGUST 17 EDITION OF THE NEW ZEALAND HERALD AND THE MORNING NATIONAL NEWS TODAY BOTH CARRIED
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STORIES, HOWEVER, THAT "MR. NIXON AND MR. MCLACHLAN WILL ALSO REAFFIRM THEIR GOVERNMENTS' OPPOSITION TO ALLOWING CONTINENTAL AIRLINES OF THE UNITED STATES TO FLY THE PACIFIC TO AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND." BOTH OF THESE ITEMS RESULTED IN PHONE CALLS FROM THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT TO EMBASSY ECONOFF TO FIRMLY DENY THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW ZEALAND HAD

TAKEN A DECISION TO OPPOSE CONTINENTAL SERVICE INTO THIS COUNTRY. RATHER, SAID THE DEPUTY SECRETARY, THE GNZ POSITION HAD NOT BEEN FINALIZED BUT WAS AWAITING REVIEW BY THE MINISTER FOLLOWING THE STATUTORY WAITING PERIOD FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE APPLICATION IN THE THE GOVERNMENT GAZETTE. ALTHOUGH NOT OFFICIALLY STATED, THE GNZ IS ALSO WAITING FOR THE U.S.-AUSTRALIAN BILATERAL TALKS AUGUST 28 TO TAKE PLACE BEFORE COMING OUT WITH A FORMAL POSITION. WE RESPONDED TO THE DEPUTY SECRETARY THAT IF THE PRESS AND RADIO ACCOUNTS WERE INACCURATE WE HOPED THAT THE MINISTRY WOULD ISSUE AN APPROPRIATE CORRECTIVE STATEMENT. THE DEPUTY SECRETARY SAID HE WOULD EXPLORE THE POINT WITH THE SECRETARY AND MINISTER WHEN BOTH RETURN FROM CANBERRA ON MONDAY.

3. WE HAVE BEEN PROMISED FURTHER DETAILS ON THE MCLACHLAN-NIXON TALKS WHEN THE NEW ZEALAND MINISTER RETURNS. WE WILL BE REPORTING WHATEVER WE CAN ELICIT EARLY NEXT WEEK. WE WILL ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA'S COMMENTS. SELDEN

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